

HOC volunteers appreciated

By ARCHIE MOUNTAIN
Staff Writer

A large group of volunteers was honored at a luncheon Wednesday for their work with inmates at the Sullivan County House of Corrections during the past year.

About 35 volunteers conduct various programs for the male and female inmates on a regular basis. Department of Corrections officials estimated the group's effort amounts to approximately 1,500 hours annually, split up between religious services, self-help and other services.

Following the lasagna appreciation luncheon, Department of Corrections Superintendent Ross Cunningham thanked 26 of the volunteers in attendance and narrated a Powerpoint presentation highlighted by ongoing upgrades at the House of Corrections and future plans for construction of the \$5.9 million Community Corrections Center.

He presented a letter of appreciation to Hilary Garrison, an intern from Smith College, who has been working at the HOC for the past five months. She will end her stay in April, earning college credits through her school.

Cunningham said plans call for two college interns to be on site next year. "It's an educational experience," he said.

Gregory Eddy of Claremont spends five hours a week at the jail meeting with inmates who want to earn their general equivalency diploma (GED).

His latest class of five students is scheduled to take its GED test today. "I expect they will all pass," Eddy said. To date, about a dozen inmates have participated in the program with a 90 percent success rate. "That's a very good number," Eddy said. "It's generally been a good experience."

He is looking forward to a new opportunity this summer at the HOC to head a reading program for inmates, *Addiction Memories*. The purpose is to learn how to recognize addictive thinking, he said.

The program was made possible with a \$1,700 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

The Rev. Alice Roberts from the Church of the Epiphany in Newport, has organized a group of about 15 members of her church to work in various capacities with inmates. She was formerly chaplain for 10 years at the New Hampshire State Prison for Women in Goffstown.

The first day Cunningham arrived at the Sullivan County Department of Corrections he called Roberts and asked for her help. At the time there were no programs for female inmates.

Roberts conducts spiritual programs with the inmates. In one, she asks them where life has been, where it is going and what does it mean.

"What are you grateful for in jail?" she will ask the female inmates. "They're really stumped at first," Roberts said. In the end they always say they care for the (emotional) companionship of the other women, she said. "It's like a time out and they stop and think what their priorities are," Roberts continued.

Claremont's Bob Hanson, a member of the First Baptist Church in Claremont, conducts Bible studies with the prisoners. Working with Jim Dube, the two try to lead inmates in a way they can have God in their lives. "We try to give them spiritual help," Hanson said.

The meetings are held in the HOC library, a small room, and attendance sometimes numbers six or seven, Hanson stated. "We get a lot of referrals from people who have a relative at the jail."

Hanson also tries to follow up with inmates after they are released.

Volunteers attending Wednesday's luncheon were Todd Dumont, Robert Beaman Jr., Arthur Cernota, Dennis Hutchinson, Pam Lain, Bob Hanson, Jim Dube, David Crosby, Greg Eddy, Chuck Kusselow, Alice Roberts, Harold Liberty, Douglas Theuner, Jane Theuner and Josephine Snow.

Also, Lee Wallace, Peregrine Spiegel, Daniel Ferry, Frank Cook, Theresa Volta, Bernadette Rose, Mary Lou Thomas, Jana Gillespie, Cathy Paradis, Linda Davies and Gail Kennedy.